

# PENSAR CON LA HISTORIA DESDE EL SIGLO XXI

XII CONGRESO DE LA ASOCIACIÓN  
DE HISTORIA CONTEMPORÁNEA

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## THE “WINTER WAR” IN THE EYES OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA STATES<sup>1</sup>

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It might seem that the so-called Winter War waged between the Soviet Union and Finland at the turn of 1939/1940 should not attract much interest from the Iberian Peninsula. The city of Helsinki, located approximately 3 thousand kilometers in a straight line from Madrid and Lisbon, was situated at the other end of the continent and therefore its policy did not have any major influence on the fate of Spain or Portugal. Moreover, already during the time of the German invasion on Poland in September 1939 both Iberian countries declared their neutrality in the world conflict<sup>2</sup>. Spain was additionally worn out after the civil war, which made it extremely difficult for it to run its foreign policy independently, while Portugal was a small country, moving itself as far away from the European events as possible and therefore with limited influence on them. There was, however, one thing that sparked great interest in both Madrid and Lisbon towards the conflict at the far North: it was the definite hostility towards the Soviet Union, which made them support every adversary of Moscow. USSR was the greatest ally of the Republic during the civil war in Spain and protector of all communist parties that acted to overthrow Franco and Salazar's regimes. Both dictators cherished traditional values and perceived communism as a threat not only to their authority but also to the world they professed. All of these factors made both Madrid and Lisbon attribute great importance to the Soviet-Finnish war, far greater than could have been anticipated on basis of the existing subject literature.

The attitude of Spain and Portugal towards the Winter War has not received the necessary attention so far. It suffices to say that in the numerous works presenting Franco and Salazar's policy during World War II only a few sentences were written on the subject<sup>3</sup>. Such a state of things can be partially blamed on the limited number of sources written in Spanish and Portuguese, especially after so many documents belonging to people responsible for Spain's diplomacy have not been returned to the central archives. Even on basis of these sparse resources it would be, however, possible, to create a text of at least an exiguous nature. It seems then that the main reason for such

an omission on part of historians was their limited interest in the events taking place in the distant, from the perspective of the Iberian Peninsula, North, though both countries found the events quite important and turned out to be far more active in face of the conflict than their geographic location would have predestined them to. The hereby article is an attempt at filling in the gap in historiography, though the Author is fully aware that continuation of the research – especially on basis of Finnish archives – appears to be necessary<sup>4</sup>.

According to the Ribbentrop – Molotov treaty, in which two totalitarian superpowers shared Central and Eastern Europe between each other, Finland was to belong to the area of influence of the Soviet Union. Carrying out the resolutions of the pact, Joseph Stalin made the first demands of Helsinki on October 12<sup>th</sup>. He demanded the consent for moving the border by 25 kilometers into the inside of Finland in the area between the Gulf of Finland and Ladoga Lake, motivating it with the supposed risk Leningrad was being put at by the northern neighbor. Such a revision of the border would involve disassembly of the main fortification system protecting Helsinki from the South, i.e. the so-called Mannerheim's line, which would make Finland vulnerable in case of a Soviet invasion and for this reason the proposal was rejected<sup>5</sup>. In view of the lack of consent to its demands, on 29<sup>th</sup> November Moscow broke off diplomatic relations with Finland and invaded the country on the next day. This is how the Winter War began, called *Talvisota* in Finnish, which made the Soviet Union authorities painfully aware of the fact that the Red Army, weakened by the recent cleansings, was in an awful condition despite its considerable superiority in numbers in relation to their enemy<sup>6</sup>. The heroic Fins earned the world's respect for their devotion in the very first days of the conflict and the feelings towards them were no different on the Iberian Peninsula.

### **Spain in face of the Winter War**

The Spanish were convinced about the absurd character of the Soviet demands from the very beginning. The Envoy in Helsinki, Fernando Valdés, stressed in his telegrams that the Finnish artillery did not even have proper cannons to conduct shelling of Leningrad from the Mannerheim's line, on top of which the government declared strict neutrality<sup>7</sup>. Accepting Moscow's conditions would mean vassalisation of Finland, while cession of the strategically important port Hanko would give the Soviets complete

domination in the region of the Gulf of Finland. For this reason, according to the Spanish diplomat, the demands had only one goal: to break off the diplomatic relations and give the Red Army a pretext to enter the territory of the neighboring country<sup>8</sup>.

The Soviet pressure exerted on the far weaker neighbor was immediately criticized by Madrid. The Fins’ attitude stirred great fondness of the Spanish society which perceived the resistance of the tiny nation as yet another stage of defending Europe against communism. A day after Moscow broke off the relations with Finland and a few hours before the armed invasion, a Spanish *ABC* journalist described the situation in the far North as follows: “Sympathy of the whole world lies with Finland in its resistance against the brutal and cynical neighbor”<sup>9</sup>. Everybody was, however, aware of Helsinki’s estrangement and Valdés pointed out the fact that the Western democracies demonstrated “obvious indifference”<sup>10</sup> towards the case.

When Moscow began its military actions towards its neighbor, the clash started being presented in Spain as yet another attempt at stopping the expansion of communism, which turned Fins into somewhat continuators of the Francoists’ work from the civil war period. The Spanish press overflowed with descriptions characteristic of years 1936-1939 and the most frequently used terms were fighting against “the Asian barbarian” and defending the Western civilization. It is no wonder then that the thoroughly destroyed Wyborg was compared to the Iberian Peninsula cities destroyed by the republicans<sup>11</sup>, while the charismatic marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim was identified with victorious general Franco<sup>12</sup>. Even though at first sight the two countries seemed to be totally different, the common element remained extremely powerful: it was the fierce anticommunism. It made itself visible during the civil war when Finland wholeheartedly supported the Francoists, which was unique as compared to the other Scandinavian countries faintly supporting the Republic, and illustrated the specific character of challenges the foreign policy of this country was facing<sup>13</sup>. It might only be surprising at first sight then that the liberal – peasant government in Helsinki did not grant visas to intellectualists who were planning to give a speech in 1937 at the International Conference of Antifascist Writers (*Congreso Internacional de Escritores Antifascistas*) in Valencia, and shortly afterwards it excluded the republican ambassador Isabel de Palencia from the official celebrations of the Independence Day on 7<sup>th</sup> December<sup>14</sup>. The situation was not made easier for volunteers who wished to support the Republic, for which reason many of them had first to apply for a Swedish passport<sup>15</sup>.

*El Alcázar* journal, grouping Francoist veterans of civil war, was a fierce advocate for the Finland case, and later on followed by the other newspapers<sup>16</sup>. The radically anti-Soviet tone of the Spanish press resulted, apart from the obvious fondness of Finland on part of particular journalists, also from the government's policy, which offered the necessary instructions to the press through the mouth of the Minister of the Interior Ramón Serrano Suñer. The articles were supposed to "stress the amazing attitude of the Fins towards the Soviet attack", emphasize the losses in the Red Army and the crimes it committed on civilians<sup>17</sup>. In other words, the journalists were called to write the truth with a sprinkling of phrases full of pathos.

The Spanish society offered a proof of its solidarity with the invaded country on numerous occasions. In a letter to the Finnish faithful, members of the Catholic Action (*Acción Católica*) assured them of their moral support and prayer for the tiny nation fighting "at the end of the world" against the Soviet onslaught. They also placed an equation mark between Talvisot and the Spanish "crusade", for, as the letter read, "today at the frozen waters of Ladoga, just like yesterday at the burning banks of Ebro, battles for life and death are fought against common enemy of Christianity"<sup>18</sup>. Answering the call of the Finnish Church, the youth of this organization organized a dispatch of 500 bottles of mass wine and 1500 liturgical candles to Finland as these goods were becoming sparse in the North. This symbolic gesture was appreciated by the Finnish Envoy in Madrid, George Winckelmann, who admitted that the Winter War, just like the one in 1936-1939, was waged in defense of the Christian faith<sup>19</sup>. Signs of sympathy with the fighting nation could also be observed in the Spanish immigrants living in Finland who left letters with wishes for the brave Suomi soldiers in the legation in Helsinki<sup>20</sup>.

Despite the poverty of the Spanish society and great losses suffered during the civil war, people started raising money for the fighting Fins and many entrepreneurs decided to offer quite large sums for this purpose. The whole action was coordinated by the Finnish legation in Madrid and consulates in particular cities, especially Barcelona and Valencia. The results were tangible: the Spaniards, still in a difficult economic situation, in January 1940 supported Finland with the total amount of 800 thousand marks. People were willing to offer aid in the form of readymade products, which, however, – because of the considerable distance between the two countries – were often not fit for transportation. Sending medicines or clothes seemed perfectly logical at such

a distance but the case was different with the Spanish fruit which quite often became the subject of philanthropy<sup>21</sup>.

The Spanish government spoke a week after the Soviet invasion. On 7<sup>th</sup> December 1939 on its behalf, after a finished meeting, Minister of the Interior Ramón Serrano Suñer passed on the following statement to the media: "Spain, which had fought like no other nation in defense of the Western civilization from the Asian barbarian, declares full support for the Fins in this difficult and heroic hour"<sup>22</sup>. For the first time in the conflict the Francoist authorities declared their support for Helsinki so firmly. Such an attitude was in line with the assurances offered to Winckelmann at the beginning of September by Beigbeder that in case of conflict between Moscow and Helsinki Madrid would not remain neutral as it did in case of war between Germany and Poland, Great Britain and France<sup>23</sup>. The attitude of the Francoist government was welcomed by Finland with satisfaction and on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1939 Winckelmann, on behalf of Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, sent special thanks to the Spanish Foreign Minister<sup>24</sup>. Also Portugal was satisfied with Madrid's policy, which not long ago criticized Francoists for insufficiently manifested anticommunism<sup>25</sup>.

In the next stage of war, the moral support from general Franco's country was manifested profusely. Representatives of the Spanish government took part in demonstrations for the benefit of Finland or banquets organized for the success of the Finnish army. First-rate figures of the Spanish political life took part in one of them, thrown on 4<sup>th</sup> January by *El Alcázar* editorial staff in honor of Winckelmann: ministers Esteban de Bilbao and Rafael Sánchez Mazas, the legendary defender of Toledo general José Moscardó, as well as the head of the artillery general Carlos Martínez de Campos<sup>26</sup>. This fact was evidently symptomatic of the support for the Finnish case not only from the Spanish society but also from the official factors.

There were also quite a few who were ready to help Finland by offering their own blood. The youth belonging to Falange was more than eager to head North to fight against the common enemy. The Portuguese Envoy in Oslo dealing with the issues of Helsinki, José Mendes de Vasconcellos Guimarães, Viscount of Riba Tâmega, informed Lisbon that the declaration of the Spanish government from the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1939 encouraged hundreds of volunteers to apply<sup>27</sup>. The Spanish government was, however, somewhat reluctant towards this initiative. Fearing a deterioration in their relations with Germany, it did not decide to organize a unit of volunteers and send it to the Finnish port. For a while Juan Beigbeder remained in favor of this concept, however, in face of

resistance from some pro-German ministers, he had to abandon it. It was definitely preferred in Madrid for the soldiers to head North on their own as such a solution would not cause any complications in relations with the Third Reich who remained an ally of Moscow<sup>28</sup>, and would still be a form of demonstrating the Spanish anticommunism<sup>29</sup>. It was decided that making the decision should be, however, postponed, hoping that – in accordance with the rule of the Francoist authorities – time itself would solve the problem. The Spanish tardiness was received with disappointment in some anticommunist circles, as was symbolized by the letter sent to general Franco by Théodore Aubert, chairman of the International Entente Against the 3<sup>rd</sup> International (*Entente internationale contre la IIIe Internationale*), appealing for moral and military support for the Finnish defense<sup>30</sup>.

In December 1939 the authorities finally discontinued organizing volunteer troops, even though many were willing to go to Finland. The negative response was officially motivated with fatigue and necessity of reorganizing the Spanish army, which was probably true due to the recently finished civil war, though this aspect may not have had greater influence on the decision to send a few hundred soldiers to the Finnish front. The true reason resulted from political factors – mainly from the fear that such a decisive support of Helsinki may cause a deterioration in the relations with the Third Reich or involve Spain in the European war.

The Spaniards also had doubts about provisions of the military weapons. In December 1939 Juan Beigbeder informed Finland about his readiness to begin negotiations on this topic, though difficulties appeared right away after a delegation from the North arrived on the Peninsula. Fins complained about excessively high prices in relation to the quality of the devices, as well as about the tardiness, typical of the Southerners, which resulted in continuous prolongation of the talks<sup>31</sup>. It seems, however, that also in this case delaying the moment of making the final decision did not result from the national character of the Spaniards but rather from the fear that aid offered to the enemy of the Soviet Union may damage relations with the Third Reich. The fact that such a threat was real is confirmed by, among others, the telegram sent on 16<sup>th</sup> December by Antonio Magaz, in which he advised Juan Beigbeder not to use the services of the embassy in Berlin in his negotiations with the Fins concerning the weapons delivery, as the code it used did not guarantee secrecy of the correspondence and may be broken by the Germans. This might have very negative consequences for Madrid, especially given that Berlin was supporting the opposite side in the Winter



War<sup>32</sup>. This peculiar suggestion of the ambassador proved that the German – Soviet alliance was gaining strength and the Spanish initiative involved substantial risk as it was also targeted at the interest of the Third Reich.

Finally Madrid decided to see the matter through and accept weapon provision conditions. The agreement amounted to \$1,2 million and involved howitzers, anti-tank warfare, ammunition, artillery and telephone tracks. The delays in negotiations and previous hesitancy of the Spanish party led to the quite late delivery deadline. The Finnish vessel Greta reached the shore of Spain to pick up the aforementioned devices in mid-May 1940 when the war was already finished and returned to the freed Petsamo a month later<sup>33</sup>. These weapons could not have been used to win Talvisota but were used in the so-called continuation war when the Fins, using the German attack on the Soviets on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941 decided to attack Joseph Stalin's country, wishing to retrieve their previous losses.

The way the negotiations were carried out must have been completely different from that of Fins, which does not, however, change the fact that the Francoist government offered a distant country from the North precious help, far greater than could have been anticipated judging by its geographic location. This decision resulted from the belief, common on the Iberian Peninsula, that an effort had to be made to stop the Soviet Union, after annexing the eastern part of the Republic of Poland and making the Baltic countries dependent on it, from growing stronger at the expense of Finland. Madrid's hesitations reflected its complicated situation on the international stage, in which the Francoist authorities had to find the golden measure between their desire to carry out anti-Soviet policy and the necessary maintaining of appropriate relations with the Third Reich. This was also the reason for Spain not turning the case of weapons delivery to Finland into propaganda, which was what the far stronger Italians did. Spain preferred to deal with the case silently not to provoke its German ally<sup>34</sup>. The fact that these fears were well-grounded is confirmed by the case of the Spanish correspondent in Berlin, Ramón Garriga, who showed multiple signs of sympathy for the Fins, which was immediately noticed by the British press and gave it the opportunity for discussion about the durability of the German – Soviet alliance. *Wilhelmstrasse* reacted to the journalist's attitude immediately and accused him of trying to break up the alliance with Moscow. During a private meeting with the Spanish correspondents, the head of the German press explained that the circumstances forced the Third Reich to turn a blind eye to the events in the North as he reminisced of the aid the Germans offered during

the civil war, unambiguously letting the other party know that the subject of Finland was not to be mentioned again<sup>35</sup>.

All of this left the Spanish government greatly disappointed by the attitude of the Third Reich in relation to the Soviet Union<sup>36</sup>. This slowly occurring change in the policy of Palacio de Santa Cruz<sup>37</sup> was immediately noticed by the other participants of the European game. The British ambassador in Madrid, Maurice Peterson, pointed out that after the outbreak of the Winter War the Spanish stopped hiding the fact that the invasion was the work of Germany's ally<sup>38</sup>. The papers started openly mentioning the close cooperation between Moscow and Berlin, which was a considerable difference as compared to the previous months when the tactical nature of Ribbentrop – Molotov pact was stressed, while actions undertaken in mutual agreement were carefully concealed<sup>39</sup>. The Western Allies were gaining increasingly growing sympathy and they were clearly supported from the moment the first news of the possibility of them undertaking specific actions against Moscow appeared. When Duff Cooper, former war and navy minister, declared in the American Bridgeport that Great Britain was considering declaring war on the Soviets if they led to destruction of Finland<sup>40</sup>, a meaningful remark was made in the Catholic journal *Ya*: “Why wait till then?”<sup>41</sup>.

The deterioration of pro-German attitude on the Iberian Peninsula was also caused by the Christmas spirit which had exceptional character in 1939 as the society could have celebrated in peace for the first time after many years of war. The growing calls to oppose the Nazi from the Spanish Church and the call for termination of armed conflict which came from pope Pius XII during *Urbi et Orbi*, contributed to deterioration of the Spanish society's opinion about Adolf Hitler's policy. “In this exaltation of the faith there is an implied reproach against the Nazis, for the Spaniards, at long last, are becoming aware that there is no love lost between Nazis and Catholics, and are realizing that the Sovietization of Poland was a direct consequence of Nazi policy”<sup>42</sup>.

Opinions of the deteriorating condition of Germany's image on the Iberian Peninsula were not only expressed by the British. Analyzing Madrid's attitude towards the Winter War, dictator of the neighboring Portugal, António de Oliveira Salazar admitted that “despite the Spanish recognition of the favors offered during the civil war, there is no doubt that Spain's general policy was characterized by lack of solidarity with Germany”<sup>43</sup>. This was confirmed by the Spanish and general Agustín Muñoz Grandes

revealed to the British frankly and up-to-the-point that the Spanish "were aware that Germany had abetted the attack on Finland and would not forget it"<sup>44</sup>.

The peace declared on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1940 was welcomed on the Iberian Peninsula with mixed feelings. Even though Finland managed to maintain its independence, which in face of clear military superiority of Joseph Stalin's country was quite a success, it left war having lost a large part of its territory, with borders whose protection in case of another Soviet invasion would be much harder. The Spanish journals expressed various opinions as to assessment of the treaty. While *ABC* stressed the tough conditions imposed on the Fins<sup>45</sup>, *La Vanguardia Española* focused on proving that Talvisota was in fact a Soviet disgrace. "This peace is not, beyond any doubt, Russia's success" – journalist Santiago Nadal wrote joyously on the front page of the newspaper, adding that the Red Army turned out to have "feet of clay"<sup>46</sup>. Everybody, however, emphasized the heroism of the Finnish soldiers who without having obtained any major help from the outside, fulfilled their duty to their homeland. "Finland was abandoned on its horrible Way of the Cross and accepted peace it fought for, initialed with destruction and blood" – *ABC* noticed<sup>47</sup>. The government in Madrid, in accordance with its tested strategy, passed over the signed treaty in silence but the second-rate politicians were far more eager to share their opinion. One of them was a member of the National Falange Council, Ramón Caranda, when he sent an official letter to Winckelman, in which he congratulated the Fins for their bravery and wished them all the best in the future<sup>48</sup>. Nevertheless, the conviction that "Stalin had to give up the idea of turning Finland into Kremlin's vassal" seemed to be dominant on the Iberian Peninsula<sup>49</sup>.

This is how the end of the Winter War arrived, in which the Spanish – both the government and the society – clearly supported the invaded nation. At the same time, the Germans declaring their support for their eastern ally made it impossible for the Spanish to offer Finland timely help, despite the political willingness to do so. General Franco's government was again forced to find the golden mean between its anti-Soviet policy and the necessity to maintain good relations with the Third Reich. These factors forced Madrid to give up the concept of sending volunteers to the northern front and to remain cautious in negotiations concerning weapons delivery. Despite all this, it was decided in the last stage of the campaign that military equipment should be sent to Finland, even though Spain, located at the other end of the continent was not the first to be predestined to offer such aid. Madrid's cautious attitude was not what the Fins had expected but it needs to be mentioned that it was welcomed by other countries,

including the neighboring Portugal which had previously accused general Franco's government of running too mild a policy towards the Soviet Union. The Spanish engagement was similarly evaluated by the Finnish historian Roni Tonni, who came to the conclusion that the Spaniards should be "paid a tribute"<sup>50</sup> for the aid they offered Finland.

### **Portugal towards the Winter War**

The Soviet aggression was anxiously observed also by Spain's neighbor, Portugal. Its head, António de Oliveira Salazar, perceived the Soviet Union and communism in a similar way to general Franco. Both dictators believed the Soviets and the communist movement they supported not only a threat to their rule but also to whole Europe and perceived standing up to them as a somewhat historic mission. The vision of the Soviet Union taking over greater and greater territory of Central – Eastern Europe accompanied Salazar from the moment Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty was signed, especially from the moment of Soviet invasion on Poland on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939. Portugal consistently stressed its hostility towards Joseph Stalin's actions, sometimes criticizing Spain for – in Lisbon's opinion – insufficiently manifested anticommunist approach<sup>51</sup>.

Portugal, located far from the chief events taking place on the continent, with its traditionally ally, i.e. Great Britain, since XIV century, had more opportunities than the neighboring Spain to openly criticize the German-Soviet alliance. Unlike general Franco's country, it did not have any obligations towards the Third Reich that resulted from aid offered during a civil war. Moreover, Lisbon was located much further away from Berlin than Madrid. As a result, Portugal could take its criticism of Germany's new ally much further than Madrid and this is precisely what it started doing from the first days of Soviet invasion on Poland. A similar approach was also adopted by Portugal when the Soviet Union began the Winter War, especially given that from the very beginning it was feared in Palácio das Necessidades that the Soviets would not stop with Finland and having suppressed it, they would turn to the other Scandinavian countries<sup>52</sup>.

The Portuguese, unlike the Spaniards, did not have diplomatic representatives in Helsinki, for which reason an Envoy in Oslo, Viscount of Riba Tâ mega, was responsible for relations with the Fins. The situation was similar on the other side. In

their relations with Portugal, Helsinki was represented by an Envoy in Madrid, George Winckelmann. It was him who on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1939, that is right after the Spanish declaration, received words of support from Salazar for the country which "is fighting nobly against the Russian aggression"<sup>53</sup> through the mouth of Portuguese Ambassador, Pedro Teotónio Pereira.

In order to weaken the Soviet Union, Portugal also used instruments provided by the League of Nations, despite its numerous weaknesses. Though Salazar remained skeptical towards this organization because of its disability and ignorance, this time he anticipated clearly that excluding Moscow from it would be a huge blow to the aggressor's image. A relevant application on this matter was already filed by Argentina and Portugal supported it immediately<sup>54</sup>. The leader of the Portuguese delegation in Geneva, José Caeiro da Matta, even became the head of the Committee whose task was to express a standpoint towards the Buenos Aires project.

At the same time a voting was to take place in Geneva on appointing new members of the League of Nations Council, while Portugal was pressured to enter its ranks. Salazar firmly opposed to such a solution – he was highly critical of the operations of the League of Nations and believed engaging his country into its actions was pointless. He ordered Caeiro da Matta to firmly oppose to all pressure and agree only on one condition - if "our presence was indispensable to guarantee unanimity in excluding the Soviet Union"<sup>55</sup>. Such an attitude shows how important it was for Salazar to punish Moscow for its attack on Finland, if in order to guarantee the desired result of one voting, he was ready to give his consent to at least three-year-long membership of Portugal in an institution he assessed highly critically.

Luckily for Portugal, such a step was not necessary and the newly appointed Council members did not exhibit a pro-Soviet attitude. Salazar, however, noticed the danger resulting from Caeiro de Matta's leadership in the Committee as he was supposed to issue an opinion on the Argentinian project. He was mainly afraid of the situation in which the idea of excluding the Soviets from the League of Nations would not gain the majority of votes in the Committee or the Assembly and the institutions would resort only to appealing for peace. It might then seem that Portugal, leading the Committee, was making efforts to negotiate with Moscow, which would lead to questions about changes in Lisbon's policy that, after all, repeatedly rejected the Soviets. For this reason before voting on the Argentinian application Salazar ordered Caeiro de Matta to deliver a speech which would dispel all doubts<sup>56</sup>. Following these

instructions, on 14<sup>th</sup> December the Portuguese representative clearly presented the approach of his country towards the Soviets during the Assembly's meeting:

"Soviet Union's attitude should not be viewed as a surprise. In 1934 Portugal, along with Holland and Switzerland, foresaw future events, voting against admitting the Soviet Union into the League of Nations. In view of the Soviet Union's aggression and its refusal to report to the League of Nations<sup>57</sup>, there is no other way. A brave decision needs to be made and the Council should proclaim exclusion of the Soviet Union which has already situated itself outside the League of Nations"<sup>58</sup>.

All of these fears were unnecessary as the League of Nations voted for exclusion of the Soviet Union from its ranks on the same day. This declaration was yet another image failure of Joseph Stalin's country, which started losing supporters in the so far favorable circles of the Western Left after its invasion on Finland<sup>59</sup>. Finland was then capable of doing what Poland, attacked three months earlier by the Red Army could not – undermine the pro-Soviet attitude among the Left-wing politicians and journalists. Also Salazar contributed to this transformation, though he approached the possibilities of the League of Nations rather rationally and skeptically and he was right in predicting that exclusion of the Soviet Union from this organization might bear great propaganda significance. Portugal was truly successful on the Geneva stage.

Lisbon's engagement into the above initiative resulted in some perceiving it as a leader of the anti-Soviet movement. The quiet popular founder and leader of the Paneuropean Union Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi even suggested in a personal letter to Salazar that efforts should be made to organize a conference in Lisbon with all European countries willing to offer Finland help. He referred to Salazar's "great moral authority" and Portugal's advantages as a "power that was European, neutral, anti-Bolshevik, distanced from Russia and Germany, remaining in better relations with all democratic and authoritarian countries in Europe and America"<sup>60</sup>. The goal of this initiative was the "immediate coordination of efforts in order to save the heroic nation in its lonely fight for our common civilization"<sup>61</sup>. Even though the issue of effective aid for the Fins was of Salazar's concerns, the dictator did not accept Kalergi's proposal. The contemporary Portugal did not have a good opinion of the political possibilities of the Paneuropean Union leader. The Portuguese Envoy in Bern, Jorge Santos, euphemistically described him as a man "slightly distant from the political reality" and called his organization too weak to effectively carry out any of its initiatives<sup>62</sup>. Salazar replied diplomatically that "the Portuguese government would not miss on any

opportunity to coordinate good will and efforts for the benefit of Finland"<sup>63</sup>, which Kalergi understood as acceptance of his idea and revealed to the newspapers that Portugal agreed to organize a conference in its capital<sup>64</sup>. Lisbon had no other option than deny the rumors<sup>65</sup>. Kalergi's initiative ended in a fiasco. Portugal did not feel strong enough to take on realization of the undertaking designed by a politician believed to be a controversial idealist, though the fact that he addressed this matter to Salazar placed the Portuguese anticommunism in high esteem.

The Portuguese dictator completely agreed that the aid for Finland should come in the form of a coordinated action of many countries. The League of Nations called for it on the day it excluded the Soviet Union from its ranks and a list of goods that could be passed on to Finland was prepared. Salazar was rather skeptical about the possibility of this organization collecting aid, predicting that apart from "good will repeatedly manifested", the League would not be able to offer the Fins anything more<sup>66</sup>. In February 1940 the Portuguese decided not to wait for a coordinated action and offered Fins corn, sugar, salt, cocoa, coffee, fruit, olive and Madeira wine<sup>67</sup>. Helsinki wanted only fruit from the list and additionally asked for canned fish. The Portuguese government agreed immediately and Salazar ordered the dispatch (altogether 20 thousand cans) to take place urgently<sup>68</sup>. The Portuguese determination in offering the Fins help in their fight against the Soviets is also confirmed by the letter ambassador Armindo Monteiro sent a few days later to the Finnish ambassador in London asking if his soldiers would not definitely need the aforementioned goods<sup>69</sup>.

Help was also generously offered by the Portuguese nation. The ambassador of Finland in Stockholm thanked the Portuguese envoy P. Fereira for the collection organized in Portugal by the Finnish Red Cross<sup>70</sup>. A collection of donations for Finnish children was also organized on the first Saturday of March<sup>71</sup>. Places for them were also prepared in the Portuguese schools<sup>72</sup>, which the Envoy of Finland in Madrid, George Winckelmann, sent special thanks for to the Ministry for National Education<sup>73</sup>.

Approximately one hundred Portuguese also volunteered at the Finnish consulate in Lisbon to head to the Northern front. There were around 20 officers in the group and some of them were even veterans of the Spanish civil war<sup>74</sup>. Salazar approached this initiative quite unwillingly as he believed that in face of the extremely harsh weather conditions of the far North such a form of aid was "precarious" (*precario*)<sup>75</sup>. Nevertheless, he assured that the Portuguese government would not object to volunteers heading North but he did not wish for this phenomenon to become

common in Portugal. The war, however, was drawing to an end and finally the Portuguese soldiers did not appear on the Finnish ground.

George Winckelmann thanked for all the help offered by the government in Lisbon on 11<sup>th</sup> April in a letter addressed to Salazar<sup>76</sup>. A few days later the most popular Portuguese journal back then, *Diário de Notícias*, published his thanks for the Portuguese nation: “The Finnish nation shall never forget the nobility of such an attitude. I am certain that the bonds between Portugal and Finland will become even tighter and will survive the cataclysm my country became an innocent victim of, also contributing to weakening the results of the unjustified aggression”<sup>77</sup>.

The newly forged friendship between the two nations had its epilogue directly after World War II finished. The unquestioned hero of Finland, Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, in November 1945 decided to choose Portugal as his vacation destination<sup>78</sup>. Greeted with ovations by the Portuguese, the marshal spent 6 weeks at the Atlantic Ocean, during which he was received both by Salazar and president Oscar Carmona. His visit, apart from health improving purposes, was also an opportunity for talks about the attitude of both countries to the slowly emerging coldwar reality<sup>79</sup>. Mannerheim thanked the head of the diplomatic protocol, Henrique Vianna, for the Portuguese hospitality and organization of his stay in a hand-written letter in French<sup>80</sup>.

## Conclusions

Franco and Salazar’s attitudes towards the Winter War demonstrate many similarities. They both perceived the Soviet attack as a potential danger of expansion of the communistic influence in Europe and therefore a threat to their rule and future fate of the continent. Even though Finland was located at the opposite end of Europe, during the 1939/1940 winter it seemed close to both Iberian nations. For the Francoists Talvisota, in the ideological meaning, was a continuation of their civil war against communism, while for the Portuguese it was a successful battle of a minor country – similar to Portugal itself – for independence. Both dictators were convinced that Fins deserved help, though it was provided in different ways. While Spain preferred bilateral negotiations on sending weapons to Scandinavia, Portugal made use of the argument its stronger neighbor did not have – membership in the League of Nations, where it greatly contributed to exclusion of the Soviet Union from this organization. In both countries the Finland case was highly supported by the society, which showed itself in organized



demonstrations, charity collections, volunteers applying to go to the front or articles with kind words. Neither Lisbon nor Madrid could have made full use of all the instruments they possessed. The fear of ruining the relations with the Third Reich, which remained the Soviet Union’s ally, or finally the insufficiently strong international position sometimes forced the countries to limit the aid they offered, though these aspects were more visible in case of Spain.

The scale of help offered by the international society was received highly critically in Helsinki, which is best illustrated by words of Finland’s Foreign Minister, Väinö Tanner, spoken on the day the tough treaty with the Soviets was signed: “We are too small a nation to make anyone interested in us”<sup>81</sup>. Against the background of other countries that could have effectively helped Helsinki but did not do it for a variety of reasons, the attitude of Spain and Portugal presents itself quite favorably. They were not the first ones to be predestined to offer support but the effort they made to manifest their willingness to prevent expansion of the Soviet Union was appreciated in the distant Finland.

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<sup>2</sup>On Madrid’s reaction towards the outbreak of World War II see, among others, Bartosz KACZOROWSKI: “España ante la invasión alemana y soviética de Polonia en septiembre de 1939”, en *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 35 (2013), pp. 177-192.

<sup>3</sup>On Spain’s policy during World War II see, among others, Luis SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ: *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, Madrid, Actas, 1997 and Javier TUSELL: *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial. Entre el Eje y la neutralidad*, Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 1995.

<sup>4</sup>Fortunately in the last years this state of things was changed by a young Finnish historian, Toni Ronni, who took on the mission of examining Spain’s policy towards Finland in his MA thesis entitled *Sota on katsojan silmässä. Espanjan suhtautuminen venäläis-suomalaiseen sotaan talvella 1939–1940*, he did not, however, unfortunately decided to publish it. The query he carried out in the Finnish archives, mostly unavailable for other Hispanists because of the challenging language barrier, cast a new light on the topic. For this reason the below text is to a large extent inspired by the fruit of his research, and the article Author would like to officially thank Mr Toni Ronni for his help.

<sup>5</sup>Jacek ŻMUDZKI: *Finlandia w polityce mocarstw 1939-1944*, Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy w Przemyślu, Przemyśl, 1998, pp. 13-15.

<sup>6</sup>On Winter War see, among others, Robert EDWARDS: *The Winter War: Russia's Invasion of Finland, 1939-40*, Pegasus Books; Eloise ENGLE and Lauri PAANANEN: *The Winter War: The Soviet Attack on Finland, 1939-1940*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg 2014; Tina KINNUNEN and Ville KIVIMÄKI (eds.): *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*, Brill, Leiden 2011; and William TROTTER: *A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-1940*, Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill 2013.

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<sup>7</sup>Valdés' letter to Beigbeder, 28.11.1939, Archivo General de Administración, Alcalá de Henares (cont.: AGA) 54/12091.

<sup>8</sup>Actions of the Soviet diplomacy were similarly viewed by Antonio Magaz, Spanish ambassador in Berlin. Magaz's letter to Beigbeder, 6.12.1939, Archivo de Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (cont.: AMAE), Archivo Renovado (cont. R) 1189/13.

<sup>9</sup>ABC, 30.11.1939, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Valdés' letter to Beigbeder, 16.10.1939, AGA 54/12091.

<sup>11</sup>*La Vanguardia Española*, 27.02.1940, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>ABC, 7.01.1940, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Aitor YRAOLA: "La repercusión de la Guerra Civil española en los países nórdicos con especial referencia a Islandia, 1936-1939", en *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (1994), p. 135.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>It is worth, however, stressing that despite these obstacles far more volunteers from Finland fought on the side of the Republic, i.e. 225, while only 14 volunteered to serve Franco's Spain. In Jyrki JUUSELA: *Suomalaiset Espanjan sisällissodassa*, Atena Kustannus, Jyväskylä 2003. The one who became most famous from the latter group was undoubtedly Carl von Haartman, Finnish actor and director working in Hollywood, who, when he heard of the outbreak of war behind the Pyrenees decided to support the insurgents and returned to the country in 1939 to fight in Mannerheim's army against the Soviets. In Stanley PAYNE: *Fascism in Spain*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, p. 266.

<sup>16</sup>Luis SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ: *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial...*, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä. Espanjan suhtautuminen venäläis-suomalaiseen sotaan talvella 1939–1940*, unpublished MA thesis, p. 59.

<sup>18</sup>*La Vanguardia Española*, 15.02.1940, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>*La Vanguardia Española*, 6.03.1940, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>ABC, 8.12.1939, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup>Winckelmann's letter to Beigbeder, 14.12.1939, AMAE R 1190/98.

<sup>25</sup>Riba Tâmega's letter to Salazar, Arquivo Histórico do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa (cont.: AHMNE), Piso 3, Armario 9, Março 92, 11.12.1939.

<sup>26</sup>ABC, 5.01.1940, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>Riba Tâmega's letter to Salazar, 11.12.1939, AHMNE, P3A9M92.

<sup>28</sup>On Spanish-German relations during World War II see, among others, Xavier MORENO JULIÁ: *Hitler y Franco. Diplomacia en tiempos de guerra (1936-1945)*, Planeta, Barcelona 2007 and Stanley PAYNE: *Franco and Hitler. Spain, Germany and World War II*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008.

<sup>29</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup>*Documentos inéditos para la historia del Generalissimo Franco*, Madrid, t. 2-1, p. 106, Aubert's letter to Franco, 3.03.1940.

<sup>31</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup>AMAE R 1190/98, Magaz to Beigbeder, 16.12.1939.

<sup>33</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup>Ramón GARRIGA: *La España de Franco. Las relaciones con Hitler*, Madrid, G. del Toro, 1976, p. 121.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Genoveva QUEIPO DE LLANO and Javier TUSELL: *Franco y Mussolini*, Barcelona, Ediciones Península, Barcelona 2006, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup>Headquarters of the Spanish Foreign Ministry.

<sup>38</sup>Peterson's letter to Halifax, 26.12.1939, The National Archives, London (cont.: NA), Foreign Office Papers (cont.: FO) 371/24514.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*ABC*, 20.12.1939, pp. 8.

<sup>41</sup>Peterson's letter to Halifax, 26.12.1939, NA, FO 371/24514.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>*Dez Anos de Política Externa. A Nação Portuguesa e a Segunda Guerra Mundial* (cont.: DAPE), Vol. 6, p. 320, Salazar to Monteiro, 5.02.1940.

<sup>44</sup>Peterson's letter to Halifax, 2.01.1940, NA, FO 371/24514.

<sup>45</sup>*ABC*, 13.03.1940, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup>“Coloso con pies de barro”, *La Vanguardia Española*, 13.03.1940, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>*ABC*, 13.03.1940, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 70.

<sup>49</sup>*La Vanguardia Española*, 14.03.1940, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Toni RONNI: *Sota on katsojan silmässä...*, p. 51.

<sup>51</sup>See more in Bartosz KACZOROWSKI: “España ante la invasión alemana y soviética de Polonia en septiembre de 1939”, in *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 35 (2013), pp. 177-192.

<sup>52</sup>Riba Tamega's letter to Salazar, 2.12.1939, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>53</sup>Salazar's letter to Pereira, 9.12.1939, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>54</sup>Oliveira's letter to Salazar, 10.12.1939, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>55</sup>DAPE, Vol. 6, pp. 236-237, Salazar to Caeiro da Mata, 12.12.1939.

<sup>56</sup>DAPE, Vol. 6, p. 238, Salazar to Caeiro da Mata, 13.12.1939.

<sup>57</sup>Caeiro da Matta, as head of the Committee, sent a note to the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Vyacheslav Molotov, on 12<sup>th</sup> December, urging him to terminate the military actions and begin negotiations. On the same day Molotov sent back his rejection. Документы внешней политики. 1939. XXII:2, no 857. Москва: Междунар. отношения, 1992.

<sup>58</sup>“La actitud de la URSS no puede considerarse como una sorpresa. En 1934, Portugal, en unión de Holanda y Suiza, había previsto los acontecimientos al votar en contra de la admisión de la URSS en la Sociedad de Naciones. Frente a la agresión de la URSS y a su negativa a comparecer ante la Sociedad de Naciones, no hay más que un camino. Hay que tener el valor de las decisiones y el Consejo debe proclamar la expulsión de la URSS, que, por su parte, ya se ha situado al margen de la Sociedad de Naciones”. In *ABC*, 15.12.1939, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup>This tendency was also observed by the Portuguese diplomatic corpus in Stockholm and London. Ferreira's letter to Salazar, 14.12.1939, AHMNE, P3A8M24; DAPE, vol. VI, Monteiro's letter to Salazar, 7.12.1939.

<sup>60</sup>Santos' letter to Salazar, 20.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>61</sup>“coordiner immédiatement leur efforts afin de sauver cette nation heroique dans sa lutte isolée pour notre civilisation commune”. Coudenhove-Kalerga's letter to Salazar, 17.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>62</sup>Santos' letter to Salazar, 20.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>63</sup>Salazar's letter to Santos, 19.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>64</sup>It was described in, among others, French newspapers *Le Temps* and *Paris-Soir*. Ochôa's letter to Salazar, 23.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>65</sup>Salazar's letter to Ochôa, 24.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>66</sup>Salazar's telegram to Ferreira, 19.01.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>67</sup>Salazar's telegram to Pereira, 9.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>68</sup>Salazar's telegram to Ferreira, 12.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>69</sup>DAPE, Vol. 6, s. 335-336, Monteiro's letter to the Finnish Envoy in London, 16.02.1940.

<sup>70</sup>Ferreira's telegram to Salazar, 10.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>71</sup>*ABC*, 23.02.1940, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup>Salazar's telegram to Pereira, 14.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>73</sup>*Diário de Notícias*, 16.07.1940.

<sup>74</sup>Antas de Oliveira's telegram to Salazar, 13.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>75</sup>Salazar's telegram to Pereira, 14.02.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24; DAPE, vol. VI, pp. 331-332, Salazar to Monteiro, 14.02.1940.

<sup>76</sup>Winckelmann's letter to Salazar, 11.04.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.

<sup>77</sup>*Diário de Notícias*, 21.04.1940.

<sup>78</sup>Mannerheim's visit in Portugal was described more broadly by Matti Häkkänen, former ambassador of Finland in Lisbon. Matti HÄKKÄNEN: O Marechal Mannerheim da Finlândia em Portugal em 1945 - por motivos de saúde ou de segurança? (<http://www.finlandia.org.br/public/default.aspx?contentid=124064>) [accessed: 1.07.2014]

<sup>79</sup>Entry in Salazar’s journal under the date of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1945, AHMNE, P2A48M196.

<sup>80</sup>Mannerheim’s letter to Vianno, 11.12.1945, AHMNE, P2A48M196.

<sup>81</sup>Letters of Fereira to Salazar, 13.04.1940, AHMNE, P3A8M24.